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LETTER OF GOVERNOR WARMOTH,

OF LOUISIANA,

TO SENATOR KELLOGG,

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE LATE ELECTION IN THAT STATE.

STATE OF LOUISIANA, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, }

New Orleans, December 20, 1868. }

HON. WILLIAM P. KELLOGG,

United States Senate, Washington, D. C.:

MY DEAR SIR—In reply to your letter of recent date, I have to say, that the personal relations between myself and General Rousseau have been pleasant and courteous. He consulted with me freely, and sought my advice as to the best means of preserving the peace during the late troubles. We differed widely as to many of the means employed for that purpose. In my first interview with him, I directed his attention to the fact that Congress had by the act of March 2, 1867, stripped the State Government of the power to organize militia, its reserve force in the event of forcible resistance to its authority. I informed him of the existence of secret armed societies; the object of which was to overturn the State Government and disfranchise the colored people, and that I should rely upon him as the representative of the forces of the United States, whose laws he was here to maintain, and through which the government I administered was established, to repress violence and insure peace and tranquillity. He replied that he would, as far as it lay in his power, use every effort to accomplish the objects indicated. I did not find General Buchanan, General Rousseau's subordinate, and in the immediate command of the troops in this State, apparently as cordial or so much disposed to act in harmony with the civil authorities.

At an interview between General Rousseau, General Buchanan, General Hatch and myself, I became satisfied that the State had no friend in General Buchanan, and that but little reliance was to be

placed in his active co-operation. He was severe in his criticisms, and seemed to sympathize with the hostility entertained by the enemies of the Government, to the Metropolitan Police department, and suggested as a necessity that the old rebel force be restored. Our interview terminated without any satisfactory understanding. Subsequently General Rousseau ordered all the troops into the city, with the exception of General Mower's regiment, the 39th Infantry. I urged him to bring this regiment from Ship Island and station it also in the city and adjoining parishes. I told him that the turbulent elements boasted that the troops about the city (all white) would not fire upon them, and that the moral effect of a black regiment in the city, would be worth a brigade of white troops. To this request General Rousseau at first assented, but afterwards, to my surprise, replied that the effect of such a movement would be to incense the people all the more, and that a collision could not be avoided, and that when once begun the colored troops could not be relied on, and even if they could, the whole force would not be sufficient to withstand the onslaught of the armed citizens. To these views I entirely dissented. I informed General Rousseau on the eighteenth day of October, that I had some days previously written a private letter to the Secretary of War, on the subject of the impending troubles, and predicting that unless more troops were sent to the State there could be no hope of a peaceable election, but upon the contrary, I feared bloodshed. To prevent which I had requested that two (2) additional regiments be sent to the State. General Rousseau said he was glad I had done so, and that he would telegraph immediately to the Secretary himself, and afterwards showed me the Secretary's reply, which was to the effect that General Gillem, of Mississippi, had been instructed to forward all of his available troops at once, and that it was the best that the Government could do.

After four days of intense excitement, resulting from the troubles in Jefferson parish, where armed bands of men were shooting negroes or driving them to the swamps, having driven the police force away from Gretna, in the face of a company of United States Infantry, sent to aid them in maintaining order; when the people of St. Bernard parish were in a state of civil war; and when the streets of New Orleans were filled with armed bands of white men, also killing negroes and bidding defiance to the police and laws of the State, I determined to throw the responsibility of preserving order upon the representative of the General Government, which had stripped me, by the act of March 2, of the power to organize a

force for that purpose. On the twenty-sixth October, I addressed the following letter to General Rousseau:

Major General L. H. ROUSSEAU,

Commanding Department of Louisiana:

General—The evidence is conclusive that the civil authorities in the parishes of Orleans, Jefferson and St. Bernard are unable to preserve order and protect the lives and property of the people.

The act of Congress prohibiting the organization of militia in this State, strips me of all power to sustain them in the discharge of their duties, and I am compelled to appeal to you to take charge of the peace of these parishes and use your forces to that end.

If you respond favorably to my request, I will at once order the sheriffs and police forces to report to you for orders.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

H. C. WARMOTH,
Governor of Louisiana.

In doing this, I had no purpose of avoiding responsibility, but I was determined that no question of authority should be raised by the military commandant. General Rousseau telegraphed my letter to the Secretary of War, endorsing what I stated, and received the following reply:

WAR DEPARTMENT,)
WASHINGTON, October 26, 1868. }

Brevet Major General L. H. ROUSSEAU,

Commanding Department of Louisiana, New Orleans:

Your dispatch of the 26th, forwarding a message from the Governor of Louisiana and asking instructions, has been received. You are authorized and expected to take such action as may be necessary to preserve the peace and good order, and to protect the lives and property of citizens.

(Signed)

J. M. SCHOFIELD.
Secretary of War.

It was then the duty of General Rousseau to have issued his proclamation, enjoining such regulations as might have been necessary to have preserved the peace and enforced it with his troops. This was my advice to him, but he believed he could accomplish more by diplomacy than by force, and did not issue any proclamation until the night of the twenty-eighth October: In the meantime armed white men

patrolled the streets night and day, sacking Republican club rooms, the residences of Union citizens, churches and school houses. During the week preceding the election over sixteen persons were killed in New Orleans. On the night of the twenty-eighth of October General Rousseau issued the following:

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF LOUISIANA,
(States of Louisiana and Arkansas)
NEW ORLEANS, LA., October 28, 1868.

To the People of New Orleans :

FELLOW-CITIZENS—I have received instructions from the authorities at Washington to take such action as may be necessary to preserve peace and good order and to protect the lives and property of citizens. As the city is quiet to-day, I think it a proper time to make the above announcement, and to call upon all law-abiding citizens to aid me hereafter in carrying out these instructions, and to that end they are earnestly *requested* to refrain from assembling in large bodies on the streets, to avoid exciting conversation and other causes of irritation and excitement, and to pursue their ordinary vocations as usual. The police force of the city has been re-organized and inefficient members have been dropped from the rolls and others appointed in their places; and General J. B. Steedman is appointed Chief of Police, *pro tempore*, by the Board of Police Commissioners. General Steedman and his police force will be supported by the military, and assurance is given alike to the peaceful and the lawless that everything at my command and to the utmost of my ability will be used in the endeavor to obey these instructions.

For the present, political processions and patrolling the streets by armed men are prohibited.

(Signed) LOVELL H. ROUSSEAU,
Brevet Major General U. S. A., Commanding Department.

In the face of this order, Democratic clubs did have processions, and armed bands continued their violence up to the day of election. The week preceding the election was one of intense excitement—the whole city was filled with alarm. My parlor was constantly filled with men who brought reports of outrages upon their persons and property. A constant stream of men ran from the gun stores of the city with arms and ammunition, and every evidence of general tumult and rioting was apparent. During this time I was in daily communication with the commanding General, who expressed

great concern, and lamented the meagre force at his disposal. It was so small that General Buchanan stated, in General Rousseau's presence, that he (General R.) would be as much justified in retiring with his troops as he would before an enemy of superior force. Such was the condition of affairs in the adjoining parishes of St. Bernard, Orleans and Jefferson for the six days preceding the election; while for *weeks* previous a state of lawlessness existed in more than half the parishes of this State, affecting the security of every citizen.

You ask me the cause of all this trouble. The answer is to be found in the deep-seated animosity of the rebel element of this State, unwhipt of justice and turned loose by Andrew Johnson upon the country without a rebuke, and allowed to resist by force the government established through Congressional law by the people of this State; in the contumacy of the old ruling aristocracy who believe they were born to govern, without question, not only their slaves, but the masses of the white people; in the lack of sufficient physical force to punish rioters and protect the honest citizen in his life and property, and in the wanton neglect of duty by the President in not furnishing, upon the application of the Legislature, made on the first of August, even if he had been compelled to call out the militia of the several States, with sufficient force to preserve the peace. You ask me if I advised Republicans not to go to the polls and vote? To this I reply that I had no authority whatever to act for the party; I was constantly engaged in my official duties, and left to the respective executive committees the conduct of the campaign. I was, however, consulted by the chairman of the Republican State Committee, who showed me a circular imploring the Republicans to stand firm and go to the polls on the day of the election and vote. This circular I approved, acted upon the advice contained in it, and voted for Grant and Colfax, although I felt assured that the election would be throughout the State a farce or tragedy.

Such, indeed, was the fact, as the following figures are uncontrovertible evidence. The election for the ratification of the Constitution took place not quite six months prior to the Presidential election. As you know there were forty-eight parishes in the State, seven of which, De Soto, Lafayette, St. Landry, Vermillion, Franklin, Jackson and Washington, gave four thousand seven hundred and four (4704) votes for the Constitution, but did not cast a single vote for General Grant. Eight other parishes, to wit—Bienville, Bossier, Claiborne, Caddo, Morehouse, Union, St. Bernard and Sabine, gave five thousand five hundred and twenty (5520) votes

for the Constitution, but cast only ten votes for General Grant. Twenty-one parishes, casting for the ratification of the new Constitution twenty-six thousand eight hundred and fourteen (26,814) gave General Grant only five hundred and one (501) votes, and the whole State polling for the Constitution in April, sixty-one thousand one hundred and fifty-two (61,152) votes, or a majority of seventeen thousand four hundred and thirteen (17,413) gave General Grant in November only thirty-four thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine (34,859) votes.

It is impossible for me to give in the limits of a letter all of the facts in relation to the late election in this State. A committee should be appointed by Congress to investigate the whole affair, upon whose report should depend the count of this State in the Electoral College and the admission of the Representatives elect to seats in Congress.

In conclusion, I assert that the late election did not elicit the honest will of the people, and that the result was attained by the most shameless resort to murder, assassination, tumult and intimidation, not to speak of proscription, that was ever known in this country, and that to allow it to go as the expressed will of the people would be an outrage upon republican institutions and ruinous to good government here for years to come.

Very Respectfully,

H. C. WARMOTH,
Governor of Louisiana.

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